

Dear Andrew, you became conscious of God calling you and you generously answered that call. But then you had some doubts and difficulties and took a step back. But God did not give up and called you again and you responded with alacrity. You have had a difficult and longer journey than many, but you are all the stronger for it, and looking back you can be all the more sure that it really is God's call. As Jesus said to his disciples: 'You did not choose me, no, I chose you and I commissioned you to go out and bear much fruit, fruit that will last.' That is your calling.

You have been called to teach the Good News of Jesus Christ; to continue Christ's work of forgiveness, healing and empowerment through the sacraments; to offer Christ's own sacrifice for all the living and the dead; and to grow to become a leader of the Catholic community

Your teaching will be enriched the more you become familiar with the Scriptures as St Paul wrote to Timothy: 'All scripture is inspired by God and can profitably be used for teaching, for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be holy.' Its heart is the wonderful revelation that Jesus is not only the son of David - a man like us - but also David's Lord that is equally God himself living among us, as today's Gospel teaches.

It may seem today that people are not very Gospel hungry, but it is also a time of growing opportunity. Our country has sadly lost its way and people are becoming disillusioned because the current values and way of life do not lead to the promised happiness, they simply do not work. But Christ's way really does work and we must do all we can to find the most effective way of sharing the Gospel in today's society.

Your teaching will only be effective in so far as the example of your life supports and confirms your teaching. Indeed you are called to grow to become ever more like Jesus himself. In this you will be encouraged by the example of many fine and holy priests and holy lay people in this diocese. It would be good to imitate one of the ancient hermits who set out to visit all the hermits in the Egyptian desert and tried to copy the outstanding virtue of each of them. It is important always to look for what is good in people and to keep silent about their weaknesses.

In celebrating the sacraments, remember that they are a personal, vital and sometimes unique moment for the recipient, so try never to fall into a mere routine. The effect of the sacraments is determined by the faith of the one who receives. That is why they are always preceded by prayer and the reading of Scripture to arouse the people's faith, but much will also depend on the way in which you celebrate them with evident faith and devotion.

Your celebration of Mass is such a precious moment that you should always try to celebrate each Mass as you would wish to have done, if it proved to be your last.

In leading the Catholic community remember that you are never operating in isolation. You are ordained to be a co-worker of your bishop in loyalty to him, and in union with your fellow priests. Christ prayed especially that all who came to believe in him would be as closely united as he and his Father '**so that the world may believe that it was you, Father, who sent me**'. As this unity is the key evidence to

lead others to faith, surely priests above all should give an outstanding example of this unity.

Christ taught his disciples never to seek positions of eminence and never to dominate others. He himself came to serve, and we too should cultivate an attitude of humble service towards both our fellow priests and our people.

We are growing to be the Church in a new way. We now fully realise the huge potential of our lay people who are enriched with many different gifts and skills and often great dedication. It is vital that you should listen to them with respect, work with them in mutual cooperation, trust them and always encourage and thank them. You cannot do everything yourself; with your people you can achieve far more.

The main purpose and most urgent need of the Church today is to spread the love of God and the Gospel. Lay people are your evangelisers, the front line of the Church.

If you both work and enjoy yourself with your fellow priests and with your people you will never be lonely and you will enjoy great support. Make sure you never become a loner who is rarely to be seen at any diocesan event. You have been chosen for a wonderful way of life which you will find more satisfying and rewarding than almost any other occupation, but it is bound also to involve frustrations, suffering and even danger as St Paul knew so well. But do not be afraid. Christ is with you, he has chosen you to be his close friend and he will never let you down or cease to love your dearly - even if you should ever turn away.

Take reasonable care of yourself including regular time off for the sake of your people - it is no help to them if you run yourself into the ground. But above all give priority time to prayer - never neglect the Prayer of the Church - but also spend good time reflecting on and praying the Scriptures for **'from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation in Christ Jesus'**. And find time for personal prayer and meditation, remembering Christ's words: **'Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty, for cut off from me you can do nothing'**.

This is a wonderful and most joyous occasion to which you are all most welcome - Andrew Shaw himself, of course, his parents and all his family, relations and friends both lay and clerical, and fellow parishioners from Ashington; many priests and deacons of the H & N Diocese who have come to welcome Andrew into their company; the College community of professors, staff and students who have done so much to prepare him; and all who are here.

All of you have played a part in helping Andrew to this day through your prayers, example, encouragement, teaching and guidance. It is right to begin by thanking you most sincerely on behalf of the whole diocese and above all thanking God who has inspired you.

As we thank God for his goodness, we cannot fail to be conscious of our own weakness and sinfulness, so let us reflect on our lives for a few moments and be sorry for our sins so that we may be open to receive God's forgiveness.

Lord Jesus, you have called us to be a priestly people set apart to sing your praises.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are full of mercy and compassion and you forgive us our sins.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are our saviour leading us on the way to eternal life. Lord, have mercy.